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FM AMEMBASSY COTONOU
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0313
INFO RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

UNCLAS COTONOU 000262

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR AF/W DANA BANKS, S/ES-CR, S/ES-O,
EEB/TPP/ABT/ATP JANET SPECK AND AF/EPS
DEPARTMENT PLEASE PASS USAID/WA FOR NATALIE FREEMAN AND USAID/AFR/DP
FOR TIM LAVELLE

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS:OPDC,EAID,EAGR,BN
SUBJECT: PRESIDENT YAYI WRITES TO PRESIDENT BUSH REQUESTING FOOD
AID

REF: (A) COTONOU 255 (B) COTONOU 5

1.(SBU) The Charge was convoked to the Presidential Palace on May 5, 2008, and given a hand-written letter from President Yayi to President Bush, which requests food aid in response to rising food prices. Ref A and B are embassy's reporting cables on rising food prices in Benin and the GOB's response. Charge has requested a meeting with the Minister of Agriculture to obtain further details on President Yayi's request. Post will forward the hard copy of the letter to AF/W. An informal translation of the letter follows.

2.(SBU) Begin informal translation:

Dear George,

The precarious conditions in which the Beninese people live because of the sudden rise in the price of foodstuffs resulting from insufficient global food production compels me to turn to you as a friend for help.

As the crisis was nearing, I anticipated its impact by reducing customs duties on staple goods. However, the situation has not improved and my financial means are shrinking. There is already social unrest and real threats of popular uprising. This could hamper and challenge the democratic process in my country.

I am striving to salvage something from the wreckage but I am out of breath. This is why I am kindly asking you to assist me in providing my country with foodstuffs, namely rice and corn. This is an express SOS that I am sending you, hoping that you will hear my cry of distress.

I am looking forward to your prompt response and I thank you in advance for all you will do for the people of Benin.

May the Almighty God bless your good self, your family and the great American people.

Yours sincerely
/s/
Dr Boni YAYI

3.(U) End informal translation.

BOUSTANI